



March 9, 2020



## Coordinator's Corner

As we transition from winter into spring, the days are getting longer, the birds are starting to chirp, and the early flowers are just starting to bloom. School is in full swing and I hope some of the milder days have encouraged everyone to get outside and walk to bike to school.



In this edition of the newsletter, we speak with Kori Johnson, the Safe Routes Partnership's Washington D.C. Community Engagement Manager, about how she uses her history in arts education to support her community engagement work. We also have articles about how Virginia's third-largest school system, fast-growing Loudoun County Public Schools, is managing the traffic congestion with a "Congestion Must Go" campaign and how Richmond Public Schools expanded their crossing guard program to serve more schools and more students without spending any extra money.

Curious about which programs and infrastructure projects help more students walk and bike to school? Explore these topics and "game-ify" the trip to school by playing the "Nudge Theory" board game with students or your SRTS colleagues.

Don't forget to save the date for National Walking Day on April 1. This is the perfect opportunity to get everyone in the house to get out of the car and walk to school, work, the store, or just around the block. And, only a month after that is Bike to School Day on May 6. It's never too early to introduce bicycle safety lessons or start planning for your event. We can't wait to see everyone out on their bikes! Check out the resources on our website (and bookmark the new URL): <http://www.virginiadot.org/programs/srts.asp>. (continued on next page)

Information is current as of March 9, 2020. Some events and dates may be cancelled or altered because of COVID-19.

### IN THIS ISSUE

- Coordinator's Corner
- Calendar
- Friends & Faces: Kori Johnson
- Virginia School Division Takes Charge, Expands Crossing Guard Program
- Loudoun's "Congestion Must Go" Campaign
- Nudge Theory Board Game
- Focus on Funding: QuickStart Mini-grants

### CALENDAR

#### MARCH

5: QuickStart Mini-grants Due

#### APRIL

1: National Walking Day

2: QuickStart Mini-grants Due

22: Earth Day

#### MAY

6: Bike to School Day

(continued from previous page)

If you have any questions or would like to learn more about the topics included here, please don't hesitate to reach out! You can call the Virginia SRTS Hotline at 1-855-601-7787 or send us an email at [info@virginiasrts.org](mailto:info@virginiasrts.org).

Regards,



Kathy Graham  
Virginia SRTS Coordinator

### **Friends and Faces: Kori Johnson**

Kori Johnson is the Safe Routes Partnership's Washington D.C. Community Engagement Manager. She works with schools and residents in Wards 7 and 8 to create inclusive, active, and safe places. Kori has a rich history in arts education and uses this background in her community engagement work.

#### **How did you first hear about SRTS?**

I first heard about SRTS when teaching in the Bronx. When I started working at the Safe Routes Partnership, I was new to the transportation field but very excited to incorporate my experiences in art education in this new setting.

#### **What is your mission with community engagement?**

Community engagement is fun and interesting, and it's an essential part of equity work. It's important to give a voice to others to define who they are and who their communities are. Community



*Kori Johnson*

engagement allows us to connect with each other, break down boundaries, and clear misconceptions. I like the opportunity to engage with people on a topic that is important to them. Safe Routes to Schools is so important because we're all moving around, so the possibilities of building those bridges is endless.

#### **What about your methods differs from traditional community engagement?**

Art is a big part of everything that I do. When I was teaching, I did a lot of arts integration in my classroom and found that students respond very well. Art is something that connects us and allows us to express and challenge ourselves. Transportation, with its acronyms and vocabulary, can be inaccessible, so art is a way to break down those barriers and give people a chance to express what is important to them in an understandable and personal way. People also get tired of surveys and focus groups, especially when they do not see results, and on an equity level, not everyone is going to or able to write a letter or attend a meeting. Art can help reinvigorate the community engagement process.

### ***How do you respond to people who are skeptical of your approach?***

I understand that not everyone engages in this way, and that's okay. I do think the transportation field relies heavily on quantitative data, such as traffic studies. My work relies less on numbers and more on lived experience. I strive to be inclusive and give voices to those who might not be represented in the numbers. If you don't value my stories, do you value me?

### ***What does inclusivity mean to you? How does the Safe Routes Partnership foster inclusive communities?***

Inclusivity means creating spaces where everyone feels like they are safe, have a voice, and belong. It's important to me that people can have open conversations with each other to engage in an authentic way. We're all so different and have our own experiences, so creating spaces where people feel safe enough to share their stories and bring their own self helps to create genuine connections.

The Safe Routes Partnership works in many different communities, so we're always trying to learn the mobility needs of different audiences and share those stories with others. We also organize opportunities for people to connect with each



*Kori's Creation Station*



*A workshop at the DC-MD-VA SRTS Summit*

other – such as conferences and webinars – to create spaces to learn from one another. The Partnership is always thinking about how we can be representative of all communities as we encourage safe and active travel.

### ***What is some advice you would give to others hoping to use art as a communication tool?***

You don't have to be an artist. A piece of butcher paper and markers can go a long way – people get excited for a chance to express themselves. Art can be fun and playful. It's about the process as much as it's about the final piece. If you're not comfortable using art, find partners! Local art centers, artists, or art teachers can have valuable experience with community engagement.

### ***Where is your favorite place to bike or walk?***

I love walking - I seriously walk everywhere. Recently, I've been doing a lot of work in Washington D.C.'s Ward 7, and I enjoy exploring its natural beauty. Kenilworth Park, Marvin Gaye Park, and the whole area is so lovely.

\*\*\*\*

Inspired to incorporate art into your next activity or event? Find ideas, material lists and helpful prompts in this resource by the Safe Routes Partnership: [Cool ideas to use art to foster community building.](#)

## **Virginia School Division Takes Charge, Expands Crossing Guard Program**

Does your school have enough crossing guards? The answer in too many cases is “No.” This can be a significant concern for parents considering whether to allow their children to walk and bicycle to school. However, providing crossing guards can be a challenge. Local jurisdictions have constrained budgets and crossing guards cost money. Crossing guards can also be difficult to recruit and retain.

Richmond Public Schools recently implemented a crossing guard pilot that sheds light on one way to address this challenge. The pilot involved transferring responsibility for crossing guards from the Richmond Police Department to the Richmond Public Schools (RPS). The transfer has resulted in a kind of alchemy. With the same level of funding, RPS was able to expand the crossing guard program from seven crossing guards at seven schools to 36 crossing guards at 12 schools.

What made this magic possible? One of the keys was recruiting crossing guards from within the schools. This proved to be considerably easier than recruiting from the general public. When principals were contacted, they often had a ready list of staff members they thought might be interested. Some had already been assisting with arrival and dismissal but without receiving any formal training or compensation for their work. While the crossing guard stipend is modest--\$2,000 per year plus \$100 for training—it’s a nice bonus for staff members who are already at the school performing similar work.

RPS has noticed several other benefits. One is that community members already know and respect the

guard, which makes them more likely to follow the guard’s instructions. Another is that the guard has an opportunity to get to know students, parents, and other members of the community better through informal conversations outside of school, which helps RPS work toward one of its key goals to develop a deep partnership with families and communities.

Does this sound like something you’d like to try? Tara FitzPatrick, the Richmond Safe Routes to School Coordinator, identified three keys to making it happen.

First, leverage well-resourced schools. In Richmond, it was a crossing guard shortage at a well-resourced school that provided the spark for transferring the program and expanding it to other schools.

Second, focus on building relationships. In Richmond, it was particularly important to build relationships with elected officials, who eventually became advocates for transferring the program.

Third, showcase your successes. RPS has included stories on its crossing guard pilot in a weekly newsletter and collaborated with local news outlets to develop stories. The crossing guards themselves are also a visible reminder of the program’s success.

## **Loudoun’s “Congestion Must Go” Campaign**

In fast-growing Loudoun County, home to Virginia’s third-largest school system, traffic congestion around schools is a major problem. Staff, parents, and students alike are frustrated by long drop-off lines and crowded streets. In response, Loudoun County Public Schools introduced the Congestion Must Go campaign, which intends to reduce the number of vehicles in and around schools.



Congestion Must Go is a joint effort from SRTS coordinators Janice Jennings and Mark Pankau and Donna Torraca, a planner with the school division's planning office. The campaign's slogan, "Just Think About It

Differently," is a gentle nudge encouraging people to consider other travel modes, like walking, biking, carpooling, or riding the bus to school.

Jennings, Pankau, and Torraca began working on the campaign in February 2019, and in the fall of 2019 rolled it out to eight elementary schools and three middle schools. The focus is on education and behavior change, with distinct strategies for each school. Jennings, Pankau, and Torraca will visit a school, observing traffic patterns and surveying students and parents about their needs and concerns. This can lead to a variety of solutions, from adjusting traffic circulation in the drop-off line to installing bike racks to providing toolkits for parents and students interested in trying a new travel mode.

The campaign also includes outreach to different segments of the school community, including staff members, PTAs, and nearby homeowners' associations. A website offers educational flyers and videos with tips on how to reduce congestion in the drop-off line or start a walking school bus. All information is provided in English and Spanish, reflecting a school division where 18% of students are English language learners.

Congestion Must Go is an example of Transportation Demand Management (TDM), a set of programs and strategies typically used by large employers

to reduce traffic by encouraging workers to make different travel choices. Schools can contribute between 10 and 14% of morning rush hour traffic, according to a study from Arlington County. School-based TDM can have a big impact: a study from Seattle Public Schools, where similar programs have been used since the 1990s, found it can reduce driving by up to 20%.

It may be too early to tell how much Congestion Must Go has reduced traffic, as the program is currently in its first year. Nonetheless, the program has already become popular among staff, parents, and students, and Loudoun County plans to expand it to additional schools in the future.

## ***"Nudge Theory" Board Game***

What makes it easier or safer to walk or bike to school? What makes it harder or more dangerous to walk or bike to school? Gather a small group of friends or students and play the Nudge Theory board game to find out!

### ***What is Nudge Theory?***

Nudge Theory is one way of understanding and affecting choices people make. We are all affected by Nudge Theory when we make an impulse purchase of something on display in a check-out line.

Nudge Theory is useful in other contexts, such as the built environment. For example, providing a pedestrian connection between two streets that creates a direct (and shorter) path of travel for people 'nudges' them to walk, rather than drive. Narrower motor vehicle travel lanes instinctively cause motorists to drive more slowly.



## Safe Routes to School THE 'NUDGE THEORY' BOARDGAME

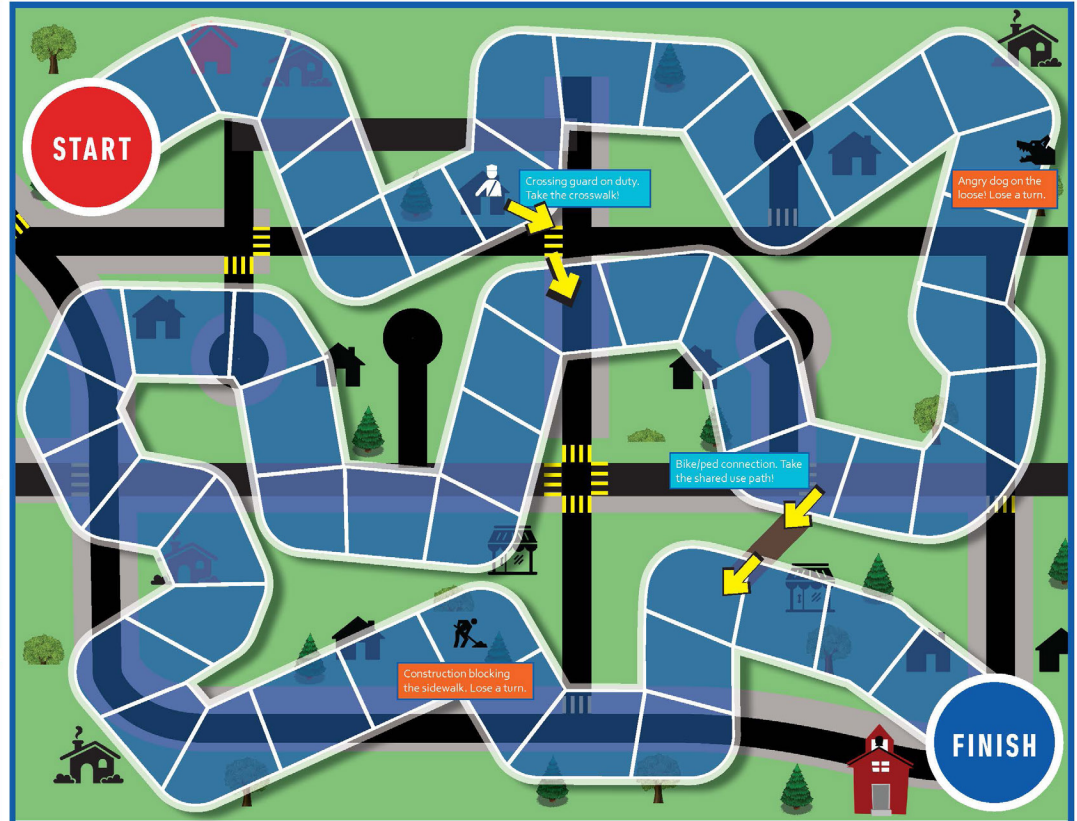


What are the most effective strategies to 'nudge' more students to walk and bike to school? Gather a group and play the game to find out!

- 1 Set up the game. Shuffle the cards and place them face down where shown. Place game pieces on START.
- 2 Decide who will go first. Players take turns drawing cards and following the instructions on the card or spaces on the board.
- 3 The first player to reach FINISH (school) is the winner!

Place cards face down here

Discard used cards here



### How do you play this game?

The Nudge Theory Board Game offers a way to travel from home to school, moving forwards and backwards based on decisions presented on playing cards. Players draw a card, read it, then move based on the card direction. Cards with things that support and encourage walking and biking to school allow players to move forward. Cards with things that hinder walking and biking to school, or make it unsafe to do so, tell players to move back. The number of spaces a player advances or moves back is related to the relative value or detriment of the thing described on the card.

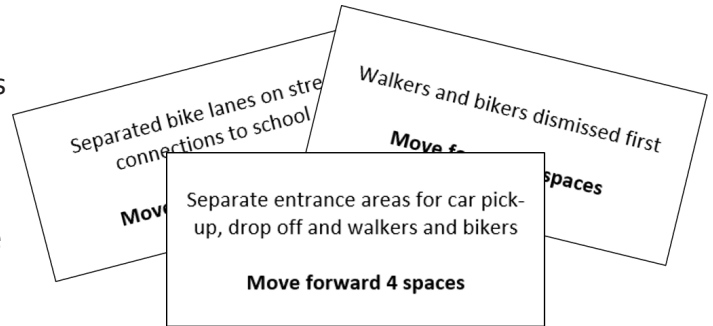
Materials:

- [A printable board that includes instructions](#)
- [A set of game cards](#)

To play, you will also need small items that can be used as game pieces.

### How can I use this game?

The Nudge Theory Board Game can be used with groups of people to generate conversation about ways to make it safe and attractive for kids to walk and bike to school. Each time a player draws and reads a card, there should be a brief conversation about why the card said to move ahead or backwards.



### Can I customize the game for different audiences?

Yes! Simply modify the language and directions on the cards using the Word template provided.

## Focus on Funding

“Focus on Funding” is a feature of the Virginia SRTS newsletter that alerts you to funding opportunities, new funding resources, and offers advice on how to win at the SRTS funding game.



Here’s a list of upcoming grant opportunities at the state and national levels.

### [Virginia SRTS Program, Non-Infrastructure Grants](#)

- \$5,000-\$100,000
- Applications due March 20, 2020
- Multi-school SRTS non-infrastructure activities and SRTS coordinator
- Requires submittal of Activities & Programs Plan (APP)

### [Virginia SRTS Program, QuickStart Mini-grants](#)

- \$1,000
- Applications due March 5 and April 2, 2020
- Small-scale SRTS activities

### [People for Bikes—Community Grants](#)

- Up to \$10,000
- Online application opens June 15, 2020
- Bicycle infrastructure projects, including bicycle parking and bicycle paths, lanes, trails, and bridges. Also some advocacy projects, such as Ciclovias of Open Streets events.

See our [Learn It. Do it. Live it!](#) on Funding SRTS Projects for time-tested tips for funding SRTS projects, a menu of common funding sources, and links to other valuable funding resources.